

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 NEA-10 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 NSC-05

CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00

COME-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 XMB-02 OPIC-03

LAB-04 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 /086 W

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R 241035Z JUL 75

FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4036

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE JOHANNESBURG 1042

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, BEXP, SF

CASABLANCA FOR RCAA

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL US AIRCRAFT SALES TO SOUTH AFRICA

REF: STATE 170434

1. THE CONGENS SENIOR COMMERCIAL OFFICER DISCUSSEX SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS (SAA) PENDING PURCHASE OF WIDE-BODIED AIRCRAFT WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF BOEING AND LOCKHEED ON JULY 24 AND 25 RESPECTIVELY. SAA MAY HAVE ALREADY MADE ITS RECOMMENDATION ON THE PURCHASE TO GENERAL MANAGER LOUBSER OF SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS, SAA'S PARENT ORGANIZATION. THE MATTER GOES FROM LOUBSER TO THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, AND IT IS EXPECTED TO BE DISCUSSED BY THE WHOLE CABINET, WITH THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF POSSIBLY MAKING THE FINAL DECISION, TO BE ANNOUNCED BY AUGUST 15TH.

2. THE COMPETITION APPEARS TO BE VERY CLOSE TECHNICALLY, WITH OPINIONS VARYING AS TO WHETHER THE BEST WIDE-BODY AIRCRAFT FOR SAA DOMESTIC SERVICE WOULD BE FOUR-ENGINE (BOEING), THREE-ENGINE
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(LOCKHEED OR DOUGLAS), OR TWO-ENGINE (EUROPEAN AIR-BUS). IT

APPEARS TO BE CLOSE ECONOMICALLY, WITH BOEING'S FINANCIAL PACKAGE PERHAPS THE POOREST OF THE FOUR. BOEING'S ADVANTAGE OF A LONG, CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH SAA IS SOMEWHAT OFFSET BY THE DESIRE IN SOME SOUTH AFRICAN QUARTERS TO DIVERSIFY SAA'S NOW-ALL-BOEING FLEET. LOCKHEED IS COUNTING ON ASSISTANCE NOT ONLY FROM EXIMBANK BUT ALSO FROM THE BRITISH E.C.G.D. BECAUSE OF THE TRI-STAR'S ROLLS-ROYCE ENGINES.

3. AS HAS BEEN REPORTED BEFORE, THE FRENCH ARE EXERTING HEAVY PRESSURE AT HIGH LEVELS OF THE SAG TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL DECISION IN FAVOR OF THEIR AIRBUS. THERE MAY EVEN BE GROUNDS TO HOPE THAT THE FRENCH MIGHT OVERPLAY THEIR HAND AND PROVOKE A SOUTH AFRICAN REACTION TO THEIR PRESSURE.

GUTHRIE

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